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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the three 1999 issues of a journal highlighting the Making After-School Count Initiative, programs across the country wherein communities and schools cooperate to serve children during after-school hours. The February 1999 issue describes grassroots efforts by California parents and religious leaders to secure funding for after-school programs and for school rebuilding and construction. Other articles in this issue describe current federal spending for after-school programs; media efforts to increase public awareness of the after-school movement; and present results of a national poll indicating that 93 percent of Americans want after-school programs available for all children. The July 1999 issue describes how expanded-day classes can contribute to academic achievement. Additional articles in this issue discuss the importance of quality for program effectiveness, how school readiness can close the educational gap for young children; and describe promising programs around the country. The October 1999 issue describes the 10 components of a school community partnership in Philadelphia, "Children Achieving." The reform agenda provides academic and non-academic support to help student achieve higher academic standards; retrain teachers; mobilize parents and business people; and decentralize the school district into 22 learning clusters, each with instructional leaders and a Family Resource Network. (KB)

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Making After School Count, 1999
Volume 2 Nos. 1-3

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February 1999
Vol. 2, No. 1
Communities & schools working together

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spotlight

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CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

Grassroots Army in California Works on Education Issues

By SHEILA BEACHUM BILBY

When it comes to their children, parents and religious leaders across California have refused to take "no" for an answer.

Starting in the early 1990s, they began prodding city leaders up and down the state into earmarking local dollars for afterschool homework centers. As a result, California today boasts more than 100 afterschool homework centers in which students have demonstrated significant academic gains.

Buoyed by their local successes — and realizing that local communities with shared problems can join together to launch statewide initiatives — these parents and religious leaders started to meet regularly in 1993 to talk about education and youth concerns.

That early seed work paid off handsomely last fall when then-Gov. Pete Wilson signed legislation into law allocating $50 million over three years for afterschool programs. And

A student works with a tutor at a homework center in Sherman Oaks, California.

California voters in November approved a record-breaking $9.2-billion bond issue for school construction and renovation.

Both of these significant victories for

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Clinton Seeks to Triple Funds for Schools

President Clinton's proposed budget for fiscal year 2000 seeks to triple — to $600 million — the amount of federal money committed to afterschool programs under the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Two years ago, the program received $1 million. That increased to $40 million for 1998 and $200 million for 1999.

"The demand for quality afterschool programs, the bipartisan support it has gained, and its potential to transform public education in America and the futures of our children far, far outweigh the investment we have made to date," Clinton said in January in announcing his proposal in Washington, D.C.

(See related material, page 7.)

California schoolchildren and their families can be attributed largely to the hard work of the parents and religious leaders who belong to a network of community organizers affiliated with the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations, or PICO, founded in 1972.

The recipe for their successful campaign to secure funding for afterschool programs and school rebuilding and construction draws on some time-tested ingredients: a commitment to researching issues and becoming experts, an ability to get huge numbers of parents to turn out for rallies and meetings, and plain old persistence.

"Another key factor is being nonpartisan," said Jim Keddy, director of the Sacramento Area Congregation Together, a PICO affiliate, and staff director of the PICO California Project, which is dedicated to parent empowerment. "When our folks talk to their legislators, we cannot be written off as anybody's little grassroots army out there."

But the PICO network is, in effect, a "grassroots army" of poor and moderate-income families who are learning how to address issues that affect their lives and, in the process, gain a sense of power as they participate in the democratic system of government.

PICO's mission to recruit and train professional community organizers began in Oakland, California, and expanded to other communities interested in the neighborhood-based model of galvanizing communities to work on issues of concern, such as crime, safety, housing and drugs.

In 1985, a pivotal decision was made to draw synagogues, churches and other religious organizations into these community-organizing efforts in what is now known as the PICO Congregation-Community Model of Community Organization. That decision allowed PICO and its affiliates statewide to increase exponentially the numbers of parents and families ready to dedicate themselves to working on problems in their communities.

Where 200 parents might have shown up at a rally before, under the new model 2,000 parents would turn out. And it can be politically difficult, if not dangerous, for elected officials to ignore large numbers of constituents.

"We are drawing upon an existing community of people who are committed to work together to address more than one concern, which is the congregation," Keddy said.

In the past decade, the nonprofit PICO network has expanded well past the borders of California. The model is being used to rally parents and families to work for the issues important to them and their communities.

There are now 29 community-organization PICO projects in more than 85 cities in 10 states — California plus Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. PICO is made up of 450 institutional members, consisting of either congregations or community organizations, and counts on the involvement of 750,000 low- and moderate-income families.

The PICO network will continue to grow and develop its grassroots leadership with help from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation of Flint, Michigan, which has made a $300,000 grant for 1999.

"This kind of organization is sustainable and replicable because of the kinds of relationships leaders across the network develop with one

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another," said Ron Snyder, executive director of the Oakland Community Organizations, which is part of the PICO network.

In fact, the relationships that had been developed led, in part, to the creation of the PICO California Project, an effort by 13 congregation-based organizations to focus on education issues.

Gail Lang, a San Francisco parent and co-chair of the steering committee for the PICO California Project, said parents and leaders in the network had been having discussions about the problems facing students. The consensus grew that these problems, common across the state, needed to be addressed at the state level.

Lang, who first got involved in PICO through the St. Elizabeth Catholic Church local organizing committee in San Francisco, said it's a tremendously satisfying way of "putting faith into action."

"Our whole business is relational," Lang said. "So we have relationships with the leaders. We have relationships with other cities. We hold public actions in which hundreds of people come together and tell legislators what we want."

Halfway across the country, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that concept of putting faith into action piqued Sister Mary Jordan Langenhennig's interest in the PICO model. She became instrumental in seeing the model implemented in the state in the late 1980s.

"It was very exciting because what it did was what I really wanted to do, which was build on the faith of the people and show them there was a connection between faith and organizing," said Langenhennig, a consulting director for PICO in Louisiana and director of the Greater Baton Rouge Interfaith Sponsoring Committee, which sponsors the Working Interfaith Network (WIN).

Langenhennig, who had been using the neighborhood-based model of community organizing for more than 30 years, heard about PICO from a friend in Kansas who reported to her his success in using the PICO model.

In 1988, she invited PICO leaders to New Orleans. Soon after, she and others began implementing the model in New Orleans, initially tackling issues such as public safety.

"It connected faith with action, but it also brought together more people because they came out of their churches, and pastors played a key role in getting them involved," she said.

"If you work with just neighborhoods, you're not using that religious base. You're dealing with individuals. In PICO, you're using the entire church. You're organizing a church whose members are in relationships already."

In fact, she said, the model has been successful in Louisiana because pastors and organizers usually are working from the same page.

Once the PICO affiliate in New Orleans was up and running, Langenhennig started traveling in 1992 to make presentations to ministers of various denominations. She moved to Baton Rouge in 1994 to work with WIN.

PICO parents participate in a California rally in April 1998.

"I decided that if I'm going to be here, I have to be active in my community to make change. It was an amazingly empowering process because I felt like a little nothing in the community."

– Gail Lang

Irene Warner, a parent of four in Baton Rouge, has learned about the power that ordinary residents can assume over their own lives by capitalizing on a network of existing relationships.

Warner first became involved with PICO in 1994 through her church, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church. She was spurred on by the crime in her neighborhood, with drive-by shootings, drug houses and prostitution seemingly taking over the streets where children played.

She and other parents and PICO leaders met with the police chief. This eventually resulted in two citywide ordinances. The first requires pawn shop owners to report pawned items to police the same day of the transaction to help residents retrieve their stolen property. The second bans hotels from renting rooms by the hour, aimed at prostitutes and drug users.

"We've done a lot through the involvement of working with other churches in our community," said Warner, who has gained self-confidence through her PICO experiences.

In San Francisco, Lang, a mother of two, also was trying to find some solutions when she initially got involved in PICO a decade ago because of a rowdy bar in her neighborhood. After meetings with the bar owner, police, church and PICO leaders and parents, she learned that they had the power to close down the bar. Instead, the bar owner followed through on commitments to control the situation at his bar to the neighborhood's satisfaction.

"I decided that if I'm going to be here, I have to be active in my community to make change," Lang said. "It was an amazingly empowering process because I felt like a little nothing in the community."

The hallmark of the PICO model of community organizing is that it is the parents and community members who are making the decisions at every crucial point in the process.

Keddy, a former Peace Corps volunteer who started working with PICO in Oakland in 1988, recalls his initial impression: "It was the first time I saw an organization truly led by the people."

PICO's focus on schools in California dates to 1993, when network leaders began convening regularly to talk about education concerns, especially about how many high school graduates weren't ready to go to college and weren't prepared for much besides low-paying jobs. Snyder, of Oakland, said it became apparent that neither parents nor their children were being served well by public education. Over the next two years, PICO met to decide on the issues they wanted to address at the statewide level.

At about the same time, PICO parents in San Jose were knocking on the doors of school, city and county officials to secure funding for much-needed afterschool programs. Turned down time and again, the parents waged a well-publicized campaign challenging the city to invest in afterschool homework centers. Today, the city invests $1.5 million annually in homework centers.

When the parents won, it drew the attention of parents elsewhere in the state. And now there are more than 100 homework centers statewide.

PICO's first organized effort to address education issues statewide came in 1995, when the network brought together 2,000 parents,

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community members, business leaders and legislators to meet with federal and state education leaders to discuss the need for better preparing students for the world of work.

Subsequently, school-to-work legislation was crafted and passed in 1997 that redirects $5 million in state funds to pay for work internships for low-income high school juniors and seniors. Today, those dollars are being used for paid internships in career fields tied to what the students are studying in school.

But PICO parents weren't satisfied. As they continued to express their concerns about education and their children's futures, they started to think more about long-term — not short-term — solutions. And they decided they wanted to focus on younger students.

"There are lots of difficulties kids run into as they move through adolescence. There is no structured place for a lot of young people to either succeed academically or to have a safe place," said Snyder.

"That's what motivated folks to look at afterschool programs as safe places where kids could get [the] academic assistance they needed."

In February 1998, leaders in business, government and religion met in Sacramento with parents for a discussion about what happens to latchkey kids — children who are at home alone after school while parents are still at work.

Shortly afterward, PICO leaders met with legislators and policymakers and began working with a state senator on a bill that would direct $50 million in state funds to afterschool programs. The original legislation was written as a crime prevention measure to provide safe havens for youngsters, but PICO leaders and parents advocated tirelessly for adding a strong academic component to the bill.

In late April, 2,500 PICO parents participated in a rally attended by the state's education secretary and 20 legislators to demonstrate the strong statewide support for afterschool program funding as well as to urge lawmakers to place a bond proposal for improving school facilities on the general election ballot. (It's been projected that California schools in the next decade will need $30 billion to $40 billion for school expansion and renovation.)

Two weeks later, then-Gov. Wilson presented his revision of the state budget, which included a set-aside of $50 million for afterschool programs. PICO parents were stunned. They had thought they would get about $20 million.

In July, the PICO network held 11 press conferences across the state to focus attention both on the afterschool programs and the school facilities bond issue. In addition, PICO parents were making their opinions known to their state legislators. By August, PICO leaders were sitting at the table with state education officials and lawmakers working on final revisions of the afterschool bill.

Marian Bergeson, California's former education secretary, addresses a PICO rally.

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Want more?

Additional information about the 21st Century Community Schools project is available on the Mott Foundation's Web site at **http://www.mott.org**.

In addition, to join a special discussion group on the project, visit Mott After-school at the site.

This publication can be downloaded from the Web site. Additional copies of this and other Mott publications can be obtained by calling our Publications Hot Line at (800) 645-1766.

"We were able to influence the academic ingredient and, second, we were able to influence the size of the funding because we were able to secure both Democratic and Republican support," Snyder said.

PICO leaders don't intend to rest, however, now that the afterschool legislation is on the books. They met in late November with state education leaders and legislators to discuss the implementation phase so PICO leaders could return to their communities and assist them in submitting grant proposals. Local school districts and communities have until March to submit proposals for afterschool programs in the competitive grant process.

Keddy acknowledges that the success with the schools program has helped give PICO more visibility and more credibility statewide. Those credentials should come in handy as the PICO network looks ahead to future campaigns to improve public education, possibly focusing on issues such as charter school development, historically low-performing schools, longer school years and longer school days.

"The recipe for success is to base the effort on the clearly spoken needs of parents and families," Snyder said. "And two, to make sure that there is broad bipartisan buy-in to the effort so that it doesn't get tagged as a narrow constituent kind of approach."

That recipe for success has worked in Louisiana, as well.

Langenhennig of WIN said education has been a chief issue for the past 18 months, with successful efforts to get state funding to improve reading in kindergarten through third grade and to install programs to help build character in students in the middle and secondary schools.

In the East Baton Rouge Parish, voters in November approved the first school tax increase in 30 years to pay for a new student truancy center and staff and to decrease teacher-pupil ratios in the classroom. WIN had conducted meetings to inform parents about the education issues on the ballot and on election day ran phone banks to help get out the vote.

Louisiana Interfaith Together, comprised of PICO leaders in the state, has been meeting for two years, forming relationships and looking at common issues in the cities and parishes with an eye toward deciding which issues can be solved locally and which are better handled statewide.

Back in San Francisco, Lang said it has been an incredible experience to work in the PICO network, in which parents are the leaders and there are people of all faiths, leaping across barriers of age, economics and race.

"In every decision we make, the question is, 'Does this make sense, is everyone comfortable doing this,'" she said. "The question is not 'Will we do this,' but 'Can we afford not to do this.'" ■

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New Grants Announced

Dozens of afterschool programs will benefit from a big financial boost from Congress, which voted to appropriate $200 million for fiscal year 1999 for 21st Century Community Learning Center programs.

In October, legislators passed a budget that included President Clinton's full funding request for afterschool programs. The $200 million, a substantial increase from the $40 million designated in 1998, paves the way for 250,000 children to participate in afterschool programs.

"Hillary and I are, I think it's fair to say, virtually obsessed with the idea of expanding afterschool programs and affordable child care," President Clinton said at a White House announcement in November.

Just a few weeks after the 1999 appropriation was made, the President announced 183 recipients of $60 million in new grants. The money was earmarked for programs serving 600 schools in 44 states and the District of Columbia.

Those recipients originally had applied for a portion of the $40 million awarded by the U.S. Department of Education in the first round of 21st Century grants earlier in 1998. They had been found to be qualified applicants in the first round, but were denied funds because there was not enough money to go around.

In addition to the $60 million for 183 grants, $40 million of the 1999 appropriation will fund grant renewals for the first round of recipients and $100 million will be earmarked for new afterschool funding requests.

The President applauded Congress for moving quickly to increase funding substantially for afterschool programs in recent years, noting that the amount has grown from $1 million to $40 million to $200 million in three years.

He said money spent on afterschool programs can be far-reaching.

"This has the potential to have a bigger impact on more children's lives, more families' and more communities' futures, than virtually anything else we're doing around here because it empowers people."

Media Partners

Media giants from coast to coast have joined with the U.S. Department of Education and the Mott Foundation to create national awareness of and excitement for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers project.

Top media professionals from NBC, The Advertising Council, Creative Artists Agency, Entertainment Industry Foundation, *People* magazine and others are donating time and talent to deliver the message that afterschool programs are vital for the well-being of our nation's children.

Through a yearlong series of articles, public service announcements, television programs and fundraisers, communities across the country will learn that the afterschool movement is a far-

"Hillary and I are, I think it's fair to say, virtually obsessed with the idea of expanding afterschool programs and affordable child care."

– President Clinton

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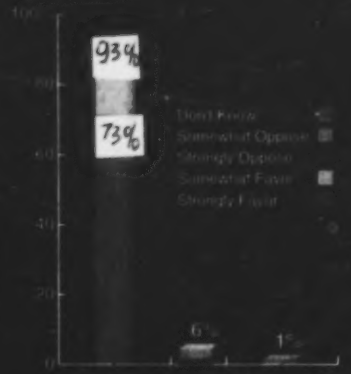
Do you favor or oppose making daily afterschool programs available to all children?



Overwhelmingly, voters favor providing school-based enrichment programs during afterschool hours in their own community.

reaching effort to enrich children's lives beyond the classroom experience.

Ann Moore, president of *People*, called the afterschool movement "a revolution" that resonates with Americans unlike any other.

"The magazine has adopted the nation's need for better afterschool programs as one of the charitable platforms to which it will dedicate substantial resources as *People* celebrates its 25th anniversary ...," Moore said when the media partnership was announced in September.

People will develop a series of public service announcements with celebrities and run print versions of the ads in the magazine at no cost. The magazine will also sponsor high-profile fundraising events in 1999.

NBC will use the broadcast media to increase awareness of afterschool initiatives around the country.

Susan Haspel, NBC vice president of community relations and public affairs, called the multi-media partnership a unique, exciting alliance.

She said the network's commitment to the new media partnership includes the creation and airing of "The More You Know" public service announcement starring NBC's Leeza Gibbons. The spot includes the U.S. Department of Education's toll-free hot line number, through which viewers can receive more information about afterschool programs.

In addition, Gibbon's hourlong program, "Leeza," will devote one show to the issue. The show will focus on what parents should look for when trying to find quality afterschool programs. It will also outline steps that communities without programs can take to develop them.

Meanwhile, The Advertising Council, a nonprofit media organization based in New York City, will oversee the management of the media partnership. It will be responsible for developing a strategic communications plan, which includes providing professional expertise to Mott and distributing afterschool information to local media.

George Perlov, vice president and director of planning and research at the Ad Council, said the organization also will develop and initiate a Web-based marketing strategy to reach Internet browsers.

On the West Coast, entertainment professionals and celebrities will lend name and face recognition to the afterschool initiative so that parents, teachers and children can sit at their computers or watch television and see well-known entertainers touting the value of afterschool programs, partly because of the involvement of the Creative Artists Agency (CAA).

The Los Angeles-based literary and talent agency, representing successful actors, directors, musicians and producers, has pledged to work with entertainment industry leaders and national foundation officials to develop public messages for afterschool programs.

"With the leadership of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, *People* magazine and NBC on the business side, we are eager to be supportive of the work being undertaken by all parties in this public/private partnership," said Morgan Binswanger, CAA co-director.

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Mott Poll

A recent national poll found that an overwhelming majority of Americans — 93 percent — said they want afterschool programs made available to all children. And 80 percent said they would be willing to pay higher taxes to provide such programs.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley said the results of the Mott Foundation-sponsored poll were proof of the importance and timeliness of expanding afterschool programs.

"What I find so striking (about the poll) is that every segment of society seems to favor enhanced afterschool programs. This includes Republicans, Democrats and independents; people who live in cities and rural areas; and parents and non-parents alike," said Riley when results were announced at a September press conference.

The poll — the most comprehensive ever done on the issue — was conducted by a bipartisan team of Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrance Group of Washington, D.C. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

The team surveyed 800 registered voters nationwide on August 17-20 and found that respondents view lack of parental involvement and discipline as the biggest problem facing children. They consider safe, affordable afterschool programs to be part of the solution.

When asked what they think about the hours after school, Americans said they are most worried about children being alone and unsupervised, followed by peer influence and time spent watching television.

Riley said the poll shows that citizens realize the value of afterschool programs for children, parents and communities.

"Afterschool programs can strengthen families and keep working parents from worrying," he said. "They can keep communities more secure and help them fight crime, and they can make the school the thriving center of the community."

Most of those surveyed said afterschool programs can provide much-needed tutoring, offer access to computers and technology, provide opportunities to learn and master new skills, and create excitement about learning.

National PTA President Lois Jean White said the poll results were encouraging.

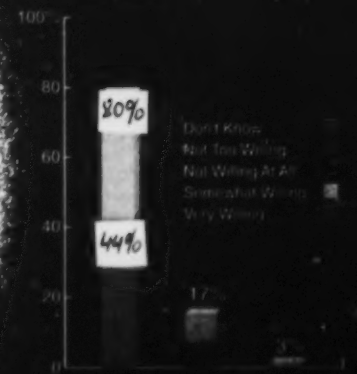
"We're pleased to know America agrees that quality afterschool programs are in the nation's best interest and essential for our children," she said.

National PTA is a partner in the "Making Afterschool Count" program, which was launched in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Additional polling of urban and rural areas was conducted, but few differences were found between the two groups. Both urban and rural residents want afterschool programs for their youth. However, rural citizens said their biggest problem is finding afterschool programs, while urban respondents said finding affordable programs is their greatest concern.

Two-thirds of those polled said they want afterschool programs to take place in public school buildings as opposed to other community sites.

This program will cost $1,000 per child, per school year; how willing would you be to use additional federal or state taxpayer money to put these school-based programs in your community even if it raises your taxes $10 a year?



Eight in ten voters are willing to pay $10 more in taxes a year for programs in their community.

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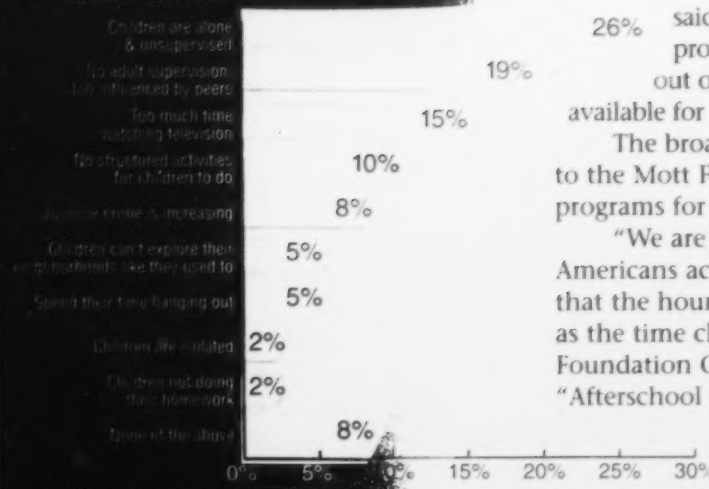
Thinking specifically about the time children spend afterschool hours, of the following what worries you most about this time after school?



When thinking of afterschool hours, voters worry most that children are alone and unsupervised and secondly, that children are too influenced by peers.

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Most polled said they want afterschool programs to be developed by a diverse group, including parents, community leaders, and officials from local governments and school districts. Those surveyed said the responsibility for paying for programs should be shared by parents, and federal, state and local governments.

Only four out of 10 voters polled said their community currently provides afterschool programs, yet nine out of 10 said they want programs available for all children nationwide.

26%

The broad-based support was encouraging to the Mott Foundation, a funder of afterschool programs for more than 60 years.

"We are delighted to discover that Americans across the country share our belief that the hours after school are just as important as the time children spend in school," Mott Foundation Chairman William S. White said. "Afterschool programs are an important first step in the process of changing not only how we educate our children, but also how we — school and community — come together to ensure their success."

Talk2us Feedback

What does a 12-year-old boy from Chicago have in common with a 14-year-old girl from Columbia, South Carolina? They both want afterschool programs in their communities.

Jetuan explained why afterschool programs are needed in his area of the Windy City. "Where we live it is really bad, and they need to keep the kids off the streets."

Ashley has a different reason for wanting afterschool programs in her Southern city. "Crime isn't that bad here so we wouldn't have to have them cut down on that, but the SAT (test) scores are horrible in South Carolina so if we could have programs that would work on that, it would be nice."

The two youth were among dozens of students and adults throughout the United States and Canada who responded to the Mott Foundation's on-line questionnaire about afterschool programs. While many people voiced overwhelming support for what's available now, almost everyone — regardless of their location — said there's a dire need for more programs.

Jonathan, a graduate student in Lafayette, Louisiana, said there are no afterschool programs in his area, but he is eager to help get some started.

"An afterschool program is an essential component in any community," he wrote. "A good program is not only one that contributes to the educational aspect of a person's life, but also one that nurtures social and life skills."

Many youth said they "love" their afterschool programs.

For Janel, 13, of Weedville, Pennsylvania, the program keeps her busy with worthwhile activities instead of being bored and in trouble.

Many parents, such as Lynette, the mother of a school-age child in Tempe, Arizona, wish there were more afterschool programs. Lynette said her district provides after-hours activities, but not at each school. More sites need to be added, and existing programs need to be expanded.

"The waiting list at my daughter's school has over 40 children on it," Lynette wrote,

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adding that afterschool programs provide an alternative to "hanging out at the mall and watching TV."

In the Midwest, afterschool programs are viewed as one avenue to restore art, music, theater and language classes that were sliced from district budgets, said Barb of Springfield, Ohio.

"Schools seem to limit their offerings to the traditional three R's," she wrote. "In one school district I work with, the superintendent realized that if violinists didn't start lessons in third or fourth grades, there would not be a high school orchestra five years later."

Funding and transportation are obstacles to participation in many communities, including Augusta, Georgia, where Armen said median family incomes range between $7,000 and $14,000. However, he said the Boys & Girls Clubs of Augusta successfully provides homework help and nutritious snacks weekdays until 8 p.m. for 130 children from 21 schools.

Donna of Redondo Beach, California, is the mother of a child with disabilities. She said there are virtually no afterschool programs that provide opportunities for children with special needs to interact with their nondisabled peers.

While a lot of cyberspace feedback mentioned the challenges associated with setting up and operating programs, some residents noted that afterschool activities prompt communities to pull together for a common goal.

"Yes, availability of funding is a problem," wrote Linda of Forestville, California. "We live in a small rural town. But a handful of merchants do all they can to support our school community. We have tremendous support from parents and teachers ...."

She said the benefits of afterschool programs are plentiful.

"Children thrive in a program that teaches them, by example, the importance of student involvement, responsibility for homework, community service, care of the environment and working together to make their lives — and the lives of others — better."

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Other Funders

Long before the U.S. Department of Education linked with the Mott Foundation to establish the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, other national funders had determined afterschool programs to be a priority.

The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund launched the MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) initiative in 1995 to improve the quality and availability of afterschool programs in low-income communities throughout the nation. MOST is a five-year, $6.5-million initiative.

In 1998, DeWitt Wallace initiated the Extended-Service Schools project, a three-year, $10-million effort to transform public schools in low-income communities into afterschool neighborhood centers.

The project provides grants to 18 communities across the country to develop and support programs that meet the needs and interests of school-age children before and after school, and during weekends and summer vacations. The communities that were awarded grants will plan and implement one of four in-school models that have been operational for several years:

In the Midwest, afterschool programs are viewed as one avenue to restore art, music, theater and language classes that were sliced from district budgets, said Barb of Springfield, Ohio.

Beacon Schools, Bridges To Success, Community Schools and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC).

The afterschool movement also resonated with the American Business Collaborative (ABC), a group of 22 national companies. ABC has committed $100 million for programs for infants through senior citizens, including afterschool activities for school-age children.

Launched in 1992 with 11 partners and a commitment of $27 million, the program has doubled its business participants and dramatically increased its funding. It has provided services for more than 300,000 people of all ages in 72 communities nationwide.

WFD of Boston, hired by ABC to administer the program, has linked with the 21st Century project, according to Marianne Duddy, WFD group manager for community development. WFD staff contacted qualified grant applicants that were denied U.S. Department of Education 21st Century funding in the first round of grants and asked them to apply for ABC afterschool grants. ABC is also providing financial matches for some recipients of 21st Century grants.

Philanthropist George Soros' Open Society Institute is another foundation committed to afterschool programs. In June, the New York City Board of Education was awarded $6.4 million from the After-School Corporation to sponsor programs in 25 city public schools, serving more than 6,800 students in grades K-12.

The Board of Education contributed $4 million in matching money toward the first year of enrichment programs, which include academic tutoring, computer training, counseling, art and music activities, and other areas. All activities are free and open to every child attending the schools served. They are available weekdays until 6 p.m.

The After-School Corporation, a nonprofit organization established in 1998 with an Open Society grant, has pledged up to $25 million annually for five years to provide funding for afterschool programs. Twenty-five grants were awarded in September, with another 25 to be announced in February. ■

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Making afterschool count

spotlight

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CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

Expanded-Day Classes at Schools Can Increase Academic Achievement

By ANN YOST

Ask first-grader Joseph Montiero about etymology and he will tell you about Mr. Read.

Mr. Read, who left his town (Readville) to hunt for runaway letters, returned triumphant and intended to start a language with them. He put them into a specially built word machine. But there was internal strife; some of the letters were bullying others. So, Mr. Read formed a peacekeeping force, the Vowel Club, and decreed that at least one of them had to be with every group of letters that came out of the machine.

Joseph could tell you that Mr. Read meets with the Vowel Club on Monday nights, and no one else is allowed to attend, except sometimes "W" and "Z," "when there is trouble with them."

"Readville" is the creation of Judith Clancy, a former Brockton, Massachusetts, reading specialist who is now an administrator.

"I wouldn't have the time to teach this during the day, but I can do it after school," Clancy said. "And it really works. Kids can

"Buddy" paintings help kids in rural West Virginia understand the value of friendship.

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The third and latest round of 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees was announced on April 28, 1999, by Vice President Al Gore. There were 176 grants totaling $93 million made out of 2,033 applications that sought nearly $900 million in funding. These grants are serving 777 schools across the nation.

remember the story because Mr. Read does everything for a reason."

Doing things for a reason is why afterschool, Saturday and summer school programs are blossoming across the nation. Schools, government and community leaders, and parents have begun to realize that children today need more than the traditional, standard school day.

Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and many other out-of-school programs are partnering with local, state and national governments, as well as citizen-based organizations such as Boys and Girls clubs, Boy and Girl Scout groups, 4-H, YM-YWCAs, Urban Leagues and ASPIRA, to create afterschool programs that provide safe havens, and help youth develop confidence and strengthen their academic skills.

Studies relating to this evolving field show that children — especially economically disadvantaged children — need extra time and attention. They often need supplementary academic help and exposure to new skills, interests and jobs that can raise their curiosity and, with it, their expectations. These studies also indicate that many children today are missing the connection to society that allows a child to develop into a well-balanced, self-confident, caring adult.

"The reality is that young people have too many unstructured hours outside of school and too few adults who can be with them," said Richard Murphy, director of the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development.

"Young people need a range of supports and opportunities when they are not in school. When a child gains mastery in athletics, dramatic arts or on a school newspaper, the confidence and skills that come from that experience are transferable to academic skills.

"At the very least, a positive experience in a nonacademic subject may motivate a child to stay within that world (of school), especially if his or her interpersonal relationships are healthy."

Research shows that this is particularly true of low-income, less-advantaged children.

"During the 1970s and '80s, poor and minority kids made major strides forward in terms of achievement," said Kati Haycock, director of Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

"Since the late '90s, the gap has begun to widen again. By the time kids reach fourth grade, they are already significantly behind other youngsters in all academic subjects. By the time they graduate, if they do, the average poor or minority student is four years behind the rest of the high school graduates."

Such a gap obviously has significant negative implications for their future. But according to Haycock, the good news is that the pattern can be changed.

"It's clear from recent research that it is not poverty and neighborhood conditions, but in fact, our response to them that causes the gap. Schools and community organizations around the country are showing that if we teach kids to high levels of achievement and provide them with extra support and extra time, they can achieve at the same levels as other kids."

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An afterschool cake decorating class combines learning with fun.

As Haycock notes, there are a lot of purposes for afterschool and out-of-school programs, but there is none more significant to the futures of young people than making sure they have core skills — reading, writing, oral communications and math.

"The top priority of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is to help kids achieve to a state's high standards," said Adriana de Kanter, special adviser on afterschool issues for Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley.

"This can be done in a number of ways: academic tutoring and homework help, as well as building academic learning into enrichment activities that will reinforce what the child is learning during the regular school day.

"Afterschool programs provide an opportunity for teachers to try new things with smaller groups of children. The nice thing is that teachers have opportunities to reach children in the ways they learn best."

Haycock agrees. "The sky's the limit."

Making School Fun

But can we expect kids to revel in an extended school day? Practitioners insist we can.

Tammy Gripka, a high school counselor who runs the afterschool program in Seneca, Missouri, a small town on the Oklahoma border, has tied the afterschool curriculum to the state's learning standards and objectives. But, she said, she's done it sort of backwards.

"We ask people to sign up to teach whatever it is they love to do: cake decorating, genealogy, Web pages. We have a tribal chief who teaches Shawnee language and customs and arrowhead-making.

"Once the activity is chosen, the teacher examines the list of state goals to find out which ones can be incorporated into the class. Then we find a way to get state learning objectives into the course. That way we get the fun in first. I want kids to connect with the passion of the teachers."

This year Gripka expects to tie learning and standards together even more.

"Every quarter teachers are going to state their specific goals. For example, the state of Missouri requires teachers to 'develop and apply strategies based on ways others have solved problems.' In the arrowhead-making class, the teacher can talk about why

Native Americans made arrowheads, why they are a particular shape."

Making learning relevant and meaningful is key, said Gripka.

When the high school's German-language students asked for an afterschool Russian language course, the educational element was clear. What wasn't clear was where they would find a Russian teacher.

"The kids were traveling to Germany and one of the events they were to participate in was going to be held in Russian. So they wanted to learn some Russian," Gripka said. "We could never offer Russian as a high school course. We can barely offer German. But we were able to find a Russian teacher at a local college."

provide a way for youth to develop technology skills.

As a result, the kids got much more out of the experience than they would have otherwise.

Likewise, service learning, another element of the district's afterschool effort, has helped to improve learning in Seneca.

"Service learning basically teaches students to apply what they have learned and tie it into a service project."

Seneca has two 21st Century Community Learning Center sites — one high school and one middle school. Both have computer labs that have become community centers.

"We'll have Grandma looking up recipes on the Internet," Gripka said, "a high school senior doing research on a paper, another adult working on a GED, and a 4-year-old playing Frogger. Computers are new for most."

Although it is too soon to point to specific academic improvements among students, Gripka believes that the district will find that standardized test scores have risen in Seneca. And she is adamant that the afterschool program will raise academic achievement among Seneca's at-risk students.

"Lots of things affect improved academic performance, such as reducing the negative influences, keeping kids active and involved in fun activities in school.

"We had a special needs student who moved here as a senior. She wasn't comfortable (as a newcomer), but she offered to teach a swing-dance class after school. It turned out she was a certified dance instructor. The kids loved it. She got to be a leader, make friends and give something back to the community."

Seneca's afterschool program has several citizen-partners, including the local college, the YMCA and a local nursing home. Even the mayor and superintendent have joined an afterschool reading group called, "Chat and Chew."

Afterschool Is a Cabaret

In addition to Mr. Read, Brockton, Massachusetts, is the home of the "Homework Cabaret."

"We called the afterschool time 'Homework Cabaret' because we wanted it to be full of activity and life where students could work in groups and practice presentation skills," said Mary Beth McManus, an entrepreneur for Brockton's Communities & Schools for Career Success initiative. The program is designed to link middle and high schools with community resources to create a continuum of services and experiences that will help young people as they move toward further education, training and employment.

In class, students may get an assignment for a project that requires group work. They come to the cabaret where teachers can assist them and supplies such as markers, scissors, paper and poster board are available. The computer labs are kept open for students because many don't have computers at home.

"We are trying to level the playing field for students," McManus said.

Poverty has been a big issue in this district, which provides subsidized lunches to 54 percent of its students, including a high of 78 percent in one school. Cost was a barrier to participation. When the afterschool programs were offered at no cost, attendance more than doubled.

"Most of our activities are academic in nature but are taught using a project-based approach to better engage our students," McManus said. "Often some of our children don't have the space or the time to do their homework. We want all children to have a safe place to work together."

Afterschool programs in Brockton include enrichment activities such as Kitchen Chemistry, the Magic of Science and Book Cooks for elementary children; plays and chorus for junior high; and community service projects for older teens.

At the initiative of Superintendent Joseph Bage, third- and fourth-graders attended Saturday School to improve reading and writing skills. Forty high school students representing the diverse linguistic makeup among Brockton's schools assisted teachers in the classroom and provided positive role models for younger students.

Saturdays are also for family field trips. Armed with clipboards and questions, Brockton children and their parents travel to the zoo, the Freedom Trail, or maybe to Boston Common for a ride on the Swan Boats and a visit with Mrs. Mallard and her babies from the book, *Make Way for Ducklings*.

The Brockton School Department, the mayor, the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and other community partners have helped with funding, planning and hands-on activities. All these stakeholders forge the relationships

Two Summer Institutes for 21st Century Community Learning Center initiatives are expected to host 1,200 participants. The first session will take place July 26-27 and the second will be July 29-30, both in Washington, D.C.

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"In Boston, there are approximately 1,500 teachers for kids ages 9 to 14, and there are some 30,000 students. But there are 600,000 citizens in Boston. It's irresponsible that teachers should do the raising of all these kids alone."

Ned Rimer
co-director of Citizen Schools in Boston

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to build the system of afterschool opportunities in Brockton.

"Once we couldn't get a bus to take children home late, so they were going to miss the afterschool program," McManus said. "The YMCA gathered materials and took the 'Homework Cabaret' to the children in their public housing complex."

The Boys & Girls Club also provides some of the afterschool programs, such as running an entrepreneur course for teens.

Sometimes, afterschool programs such as Judith Clancy's "Readville" may look like simple reading programs, but actually they are unusual ways to address deeper social issues, such as conflict resolution. Invariably, programs become a way of opening children up to things they wouldn't otherwise experience.

"We had scheduled a visit to an assisted living complex," McManus said, "and nobody wanted to go. But the senior citizens talked to the kids, listened to them and baked cookies with them. After that, everybody wanted to attend. Many of our students are starving for attention."

McManus said that after four years of providing afterschool experiences, standardized test scores in Brockton have risen. In fact, the Iowa test scores for Brockton show a general increase, with third-graders leading the way.

"While we cannot attribute all of these gains to afterschool programs, they have certainly had an impact on student performance," she said. "We have shown that extra time, attention and caring have made a difference for many of our students."

Volunteer citizen teachers work with students in Boston.

Community Connection

Something else that makes a difference, experts agree, is the involvement of community-based organizations (CBOs) in afterschool success.

"CBOs have some of the strongest programs for youth," according to the Center for Policy and Research's Murphy. "In the

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next 20 years, I predict we'll see CBOs and schools moving together to create a seamless day between school and post 3 p.m. Some schools will even become community centers, open seven days a week, in which formal education happens."

Former teacher Ned Rimer is now co-director of Citizen Schools, a private nonprofit corporation that partners with the Boston mayor's afterschool initiative, "2:00-to-6:00," and takes learning into the community in the form of apprenticeships.

"In Boston," said Rimer, "there are approximately 1,500 teachers for kids ages 9 to 14, and there are some 30,000 students. But there are 600,000 citizens in Boston. It's irresponsible that teachers should do the raising of all these kids alone. We wondered how we could get those citizens involved in the lives of children."

Citizen Schools found a way.

Through Citizen Schools, more than 1,000 volunteer citizen teachers have worked with Boston students in an apprenticeship format. As Rimer sees it, apprenticeships prepare youth for the adult world of responsibility and help them develop social skills they will need.

"We've found that at middle-school age, many kids mentally drop out of school," Rimer said. "We hope that with these apprenticeships the kids will get excited about learning."

Citizen volunteers spend 20 hours over 10 weeks with a group of youngsters. Apprentices, with their teacher, learn skills by doing. At the end of the 10 weeks, there is a product that can be given back to the community.

One group that spent time with a community police officer wrote a manual called *Safety Tips for Kids by Kids*. They printed the guide, and the police department is still handing it out four years later.

"Another group did a marketing study," Rimer said. "They researched who buys flowers and on what days, then they took their data back to the owner of a local flower shop."

Another group worked with a chef and cooked and served a gourmet meal at a local senior center. Apprentices also have written, produced and distributed newspapers with journalists, worked with a physician to produce a nonsmoking video starring themselves, and learned how to give emergency care in case of a playground accident.

Recently, employees of local law firms worked with groups of students to study the legal system. The students performed in mock trials at the federal courthouse, presided over by federal district judges while adults, including Boston's police commissioner, sat on the jury.

James Armstrong, now in ninth grade, participated in 15 apprenticeships while a student at Wilson Middle School, a 21st Century Community Learning Center site.

"I set up an electric car race at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in Boston, sold African violet plants, set up a road race and worked on public safety," he said. "Citizen School is a fun place to come to and learn new things and do things you've never done before."

That's what Rimer likes to hear.

"Rather than an inch deep and a mile wide, they get really good at something in 20 hours. That's where they get the curiosity for learning."

Although the apprenticeship program looks and feels different from what is going on during the school day, the staff has worked closely with school officials to make sure the program is connecting with Boston learning standards, specifically those of writing and data analysis.

Boston is widely recognized as leading efforts to bring public, private and nonprofit interests together to improve public education. The mayor has made it one of his top priorities with emphasis on expanding afterschool activities for all children and tying those activities to Boston public school goals.

According to Jennifer Davis, executive director of Boston's "2:00-to-6:00" initiative, city officials and nonprofit groups are working together to look at how Boston might measure and track progress around a number of indicators, including academic achievement. The city hopes to put in place a continuous improvement model that over time will help the district gauge impact.

"We're not just exposing kids to these fields," Rimer said. "With guidance and coaching, they are connecting with a product and a process. An important piece of this is that the kids are seen as producers, not just consumers. We see the education of youth through the lens of educating and strengthening community."

And sometimes, the learning may be simple but have lifelong benefits.

"I've learned to shake hands and look people in the eye," said Thomas Totten, a seventh-grader at Woodrow Wilson Middle School.

Programs like Citizen Schools, and Brockton and Seneca's afterschool programs underscore the importance of making learning fun, involving the community in the education of its children, and, in the process, fostering that all-important connection to society. The bottom line, experts agree, is that kids get the support they need to learn.

"As we see it in Citizen Schools, it takes a child to strengthen a community," Rimer said. ■

Quality Key to Effectiveness

Three hours might not seem like a lot of time, but with 78 percent of mothers of school-age children in the work force, those hours between school dismissal and supper at home have become a national concern.

This is particularly the case in low-income communities as more and more mothers are working to make ends meet and, as a result, more vulnerable children are left alone in high-risk neighborhoods to hang out or spend hours watching television, isolated from the world.

While there always has been concern for child safety in these circumstances, educators and child-care experts increasingly are concerned about the children's academic and emotional development.

According to Deborah Lowe Vandell, a University of Wisconsin professor, one promising strategy to address safety, academic and social development is afterschool programs.

Vandell has been studying afterschool issues for more than 15 years. Her research has taken her from studying afterschool arrangements of middle-class suburban children to several multiyear studies of low-income families in Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin.

Vandell's findings, along with those of her colleagues Jill Posner and Kim Pierce, are especially timely as afterschool hours in high-risk, inner-city communities have become the focus of national, state and local efforts across the country, including the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative.

Vandell is encouraged that afterschool programs can make a significant difference for vulnerable children.

"Our findings, to date, across different studies, demonstrate that afterschool programs can improve school performance, work habits and school attendance, if program quality is sufficient. They also can serve a protective function for children in high-risk families and neighborhoods."

Several studies examining afterschool programs found that children from targeted areas had better conflict management strategies, attended school more often, developed better work habits and skills at working with others, and spent more time in academic and enrichment activities than their non-program peers from the same neighborhood.

But, Vandell warned, program designers should beware because poor-quality programs may undermine a child's development. Child care, in and of itself, does not address the full range of needs of children.

"Our examination revealed that children who attended formal afterschool programs were exposed to more learning opportunities than children in other forms of afterschool care. They spent more time in academic activities and in enrichment lessons and less time watching television and engaging in unstructured activities in the neighborhood. Unless they participated in afterschool programs, enrichment

Since the bipartisan, 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative began, $193 million in grants have reached more than 1,600 schools in 49 states (all but Idaho), the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands, and are serving almost 400,000 students. Grants range in size from $25,000 to more than $2.6 million a year for three years.

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activities such as music, dance and team sports were not a part of the lives of the low-income children."

Moreover, Vandell, who also examined the effects of self-care in low-income neighborhoods, found that the amount of time children spent without adult supervision was correlated with children's antisocial behavior.

She became interested in afterschool care in 1985 when her own son entered kindergarten.

"I had a surprise," Vandell said. "During earlier struggles to find dependable, high quality child care, I had assumed, naively, that my child-care worries would be over once my son began elementary school. I was wrong. When school holidays, teacher in-service days and summer vacations were added to the mix, we still had at least one child-care crisis each month."

Vandell's family went on to patch together various care arrangements, as do 75 percent of the families in which mothers of school-age children work, according to child-care experts. But what middle-income parents can patch together is different from lower-income families. When families cannot pay for clubs and lessons, children wind up in day-care situations or home alone.

"I have been distressed that schools have considered afterschool activities 'nonessential' and discontinued them," Vandell said. "I think they are really important."

A significant challenge for afterschool providers is making sure that age-appropriate activities are available, she said. Afterschool programs in the past served the needs of young children, but the program design didn't change as the children grew. Obviously, what attracts a child in first grade may leave a fifth-grader cold.

"We found in our research that enrollment went steadily downhill," Vandell said. "The most children would be enrolled at the youngest age and every year the number would drop. By sixth grade there would be about 2 percent of the original children left."

Drawing upon experience and research, Vandell believes that afterschool programs for vulnerable children living in high-risk communities should model the afterschool offerings provided to children in economically healthier communities.

"Programs should take a more activity-based approach in the context of schools, community centers, churches, and other organizations. What you see happening in the data I have, and in national survey data, is that (middle-class) children increase their involvement in out-of-school activities as they get older — activities like coached sports, art, drama, piano lessons, scouts and so forth.

"What kids derive from extracurricular activities are things like work habits, self-discipline, focus and motivation. What comes with them is a sense of competence, 'I've done something well that I'm interested in.'"

A model program, according to Vandell, would be one where a variety of activities is offered and children select what interests them. For younger children, there would be enrichment programs on site. For older children, fourth grade and up, activities would be available at the school as well as through community centers and churches.

"The sites (such as schools) are available," she said. "The real challenge would be in coming up with staff for the programs." ■

K.I.D.S. Kits: Quality Curriculum

Outside, it could be a warm, sunny day or a dismal, rainy day. But inside, kids sit in a darkened room around a campfire made of tissue paper, hot glue and lights. They listen to the soft beating of a tom-tom and gentle music. A child's soft voice tells a story of constellations: "The Six Wives Who Ate Onions" and "The Coyote's Eyeball," according to Native American lore.

"Native American Star Stories" is one lesson from K.I.D.S. Kits, a collection of creative curriculum compiled by the Urban Family Institute (UFI) from more than 20 national organizations. The kits are designed for schools and community organizations trying to serve children during out-of-school time.

Kids Integrated Development Systems (K.I.D.S.) Kits provide a year's worth of activities that can be taught by parents, volunteers or teachers. The activities are tied to national academic standards and are modified to be age-appropriate for children from 3 to 15 years old.

Lessons from the kits use a themed, multidisciplinary approach to help children view themselves first as part of a small group and then as part of larger groups, such as their community, nation and world.

The kits are packaged in drawers of what looks like a small house, which represents the concept of a safe haven for children to learn. Each activity is written for all age groups and is very activity-based and interactive. It includes manipulatives, maps, videos, posters and books. The lessons are tied to national education standards and encourage children to think and to solve problems.

The Smithsonian Institution, Children's Rainforest, Scholastic, 4-H Clubs, Reading Rainbow and National Geographic are among the kit contributors.

UFI began compiling the kits in 1998 in response to a national need for expanded afterschool opportunities and a corresponding need for supplemental academic experiences for children, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

UFI was founded in 1991 by Kent and Carmen Amos, Washington, D.C., parents, who have adopted and raised dozens of vulnerable youth. The institute has formalized the informal work the couple had

A student mentor provides a one-on-one learning experience.

"There are still too many girls and too many children of color who get the message that math and science aren't for them. (Our) goal is to help girls acquire the skills they need to survive in the information age of the 21st century."

Vera Atilano
program director of Girls Inc. of Metro Denver

done for years on their own. Staff from the institute teaches volunteers from all over the country how to create a local "Kids House" for the children in their neighborhoods.

"The K.I.D.S. kits were developed because we found that in more and more Kids Houses, parents and grandparents were working with kids and were asking us how to enrich the time, how to tie their activities to academics, outdoor play and tutoring," said UFI's Caitlin Wood Sklar.

UFI received a $1.4-million Mott Foundation grant to compile the kits, which will be available to the public in the fall. To be placed on the mailing list, call (202) 234-KIDS.

Contact: *Caitlin Wood Sklar, 202-234-KIDS*

West Virginia: Learning Doesn't Take a Break

Summertime, that two-and-a-half-month break in the school year, traditionally represents a learning loss for elementary-age children. In low-income areas, it also can mean a child loses out on daily nutrition requirements.

Energy Express, a six-week summer program in West Virginia, offers more than 3,000 rural children a combination of reading and nutritional balance aimed at arresting those issues.

The program, created in 1994, operates at 76 sites in 38 counties. Groups of eight children interact with college student mentors, most of whom attend West Virginia's universities and are sponsored by AmeriCorps. Each day includes breakfast and lunch, as well as projects such as creating books, writing and performing plays, keeping journals, reading, and exploring creative art activities.

"Reading activities," said Ruthellen Phillips, West Virginia University faculty member and program director, "are structured around weekly themes such as family, friends, home, community and ideal world, which helps the children appreciate themselves and their personal experiences."

The reading level for children who participated in Energy Express in summer 1998 was maintained or increased, she said. On average, children gained one month in word identification, three months in comprehension and two months in overall reading, according to a rigorous evaluation.

Kendra Evans, a mentor in Monongalia County, said the experience of one child in her class was especially gratifying.

"The child's name was Susie. She started out really wanting to learn how to read, but she needed a lot of help. Throughout the program, our reading time together would consist of me reading a line and her repeating the same line. This went on for three or four weeks. In the fifth week, Susie got up to do her read-aloud for the day and when she was finished, she made a huge announcement to the class, 'I can read!'"

Hannah More, a third-grader at Dingess Elementary School wrote an extensive journal about books read, projects painted and friends made. She wrote about Erin Hannah, her mentor and special friend, who not only helped children to read and write, but also taught them table manners during the family-style meals. According to Hannah's journal:

Erin taught everyone about good manners. If I wanted a roll, I would say, 'Would you

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Reading helps children appreciate themselves and the world around them.

please pass the rolls?' and when they passed them, I would say, 'Thank you.' The girls were better at table manners than the boys. Sometimes Jason would forget to say 'Excuse me' when he burped, and he really burped a lot.

Energy Express is held in schools with at least 50 percent of the students receiving free or reduced lunches. State and national partners are joined by local partners in support of the program. Local partners include civic organizations, boards of education, churches, extension organizations, Foster Grandparents, libraries and parent organizations.

Contact: *Ruthellen Phillips, 304-293-2694*

Denver: Academics reinforced by adults

It's not unusual for Principal Don Manzanares of Skinner Middle School to go to work on Saturdays. It also is not unusual for him to arrive with his arms full of breakfast burritos — enough for the 50 or so children who attend Skinner's Saturday School.

"He (Manzanares) loves the program," said Nancy Carter, project director for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers' middle school initiative of the Denver Public Schools.

The kids seem to love it, too. There has been a 95 percent completion rate and, although some of its participants have been referred by the court system, many of them stay on long after their mandated time.

"Saturday school surrounds children with caring adults," Carter said.

"From 8 to noon every other Saturday, they have three periods of academics and two periods of recreation. It is academic remediation presented as an opportunity, not as a punishment. The kids respond to it because it gets them results.

"We've already seen a 10 percent increase in regular attendance at the middle school, because kids who miss school are not allowed to come on Saturday."

Deb Mumford, a Skinner counselor, is a major strength of Saturday School.

"She's the heart of it," Carter said. "Her room is a safe place and kids confide

"High quality afterschool programs are an essential support for children's achievement. They also provide positive alternatives to the street for the five million children who come home to empty houses. The key, however, is good curriculum, good book lists and thoughtful teacher selection, development and training."

Marian Wright Edelman
president of Children's Defense Fund

in her. She's not in an authoritarian role. Every week she talks with the classroom teachers and picks up assignments for Saturday. The work is customized for each child. And Deb checks in with the kids during the school week."

Another caring adult is Scott Hyde, director of the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Denver. He got involved with Saturday School when he was asked to supply a lifeguard for the new endeavor.

"The interchange between the programs has been tremendous," Hyde said. "We are right down the street, and many of the kids who attend the club are the ones at the Saturday School. I always encourage them to go there because they can raise their grades. We (the Boys and Girls Club) have always had a great relationship with Skinner Middle School."

Lake and Horace Mann middle schools, Denver's other 21st century sites, offer afterschool programs that are based on literacy improvement.

"At Lake, kids had to write, script, design and put on a puppet show for elementary school kids. The focus is reading and writing," Carter said.

"At Horace Mann, we did a low-rider club. Kids built low-rider model cars with velvet seats. There was a lot of reading comprehension needed for them to understand and use the directions to build the models."

Middle school, Carter said, is the time to focus out-of-school attention.

"This is the time parents assume kids can be on their own. In elementary school kids are in a protective safety net. They are not as much into the herd instinct. But in junior high there is more freedom, and there are lots of choices. Juvenile crime goes up at that age."

Contact: *Nancy Carter, 303-764-3398*

Washington, D.C.: Academic support in many shapes

"At the beginning of our afterschool sessions, we have a pep talk or a cheer," said Michael Watts, director of the J.C. Nalle Community School extended-day program. "One day I got in front of the group to do the pep talk. Afterwards I asked for a volunteer to assist me. All the children ran up to me and, in their enthusiasm, knocked me down."

Such enthusiasm is not uncommon in and around Nalle's extended-day program. One look at the goals established for the afterschool program, and it is readily apparent that the community is both ambitious and enthusiastic about what can happen through collaboration.

"We want to improve academic performance, to provide a safe place for children, to be a catalyst for transforming the neighborhood and to become, ultimately part of a seamless web of support services for our children," said Michael Watts, program director. "We believe that given the proper support and resources, families will be successful."

The two-year-old program stresses academics.

"Our goal has been to provide 12 hours a week of intense academic support," Watts said. "Two days a week are spent on math

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and two on reading. On Friday we have enrichment programs such as dance, arts and crafts, science projects, newspaper club, and public speaking. Volunteers come in to lead those, while regular classroom teachers do the reading and math.

"Every day there is assistance on the most difficult homework, and we have daily test-taking activities, both for diagnostic and instructional purposes. The tests help us identify what the child needs and taking the tests helps the child become used to taking tests.

"Our students were functioning below the basic level on standardized tests. We have seen a 10 percent improvement over the two years."

Watts has made a major effort to bring parents into the school and to set up partnerships with area churches and the civic association in Marshall Heights, the low-income neighborhood served by the school.

"Marshall Heights has high indicators of crime, child abuse and neglect. It is a neighborhood often overlooked," Watts said. "We want to create a successful school and also be a catalyst for neighborhood transformation."

Watts has seen a transformation in some of the teachers, too.

"There was a male teacher at the school who was gone by 3 o'clock every day. He'd complain if the afterschool kids didn't put the blocks back correctly in his room.

"This teacher liked science, so the principal and I invited him to visit a school in Maryland that brings science into the classroom," said Watts. "He was so impressed that he asked if he could become a teacher in the extended-day program and use the science curriculum. He is now a totally involved teacher. He is enthusiastic and innovative. He is also our only male teacher in extended day."

The extended-day program has had 100 percent attendance, according to Watts. He believes the results of that positive attitude have spilled over into the regular school day in the form of increased patience on the part of teachers and a tendency to share on the part of children.

"We focus on the strengths in after school," Watts said. "We try to stress praise and support."

Contact: *Michael Watts, 202-582-1930*

Tucson: Enthralling youth in unexpected ways

When *Proyecto Sano y Salvo* (Project Safe and Sound) opened its doors at three Tucson, Arizona, middle schools last September, coordinators had no idea that they were opening the doors to snakes, soldiers and fish as well as children.

According to Barbara Benton, project director, "The University of Arizona created a science-based curriculum for us. One of the first things they did was to send an expert in 'snakeology' — the word the kids use for 'herpatology' — to each of the schools. He showed the kids how to track a rattlesnake and look at its habitat, the Arizona desert. In addition, the students were able to observe other snakes common to the area."

Such an adventure is quite common these days in Tucson. Each middle school has a committee composed of administrators, teachers, parents and community members who collaborate in the development of the

program. The schools' principals and staff align afterschool activities with the school's core curriculum.

Sano y Salvo was intended to serve 600 children in 1998-99 but ended up enrolling more than 1,000 because of demand. The schools serve low-income areas of Tucson. Many of the students enrolled have been adjudicated and referred to the program by counselors.

Classes are taught by classroom teachers, community members, and students from the University of Arizona and Pima Community College. The colleges also provide tutors.

"We listened to the kids in setting up the program," Benton said. "A Spanish teacher had said she would teach Spanish, but the kids didn't want that. They wanted someone else. So our Spanish teacher has been teaching aerobics after school."

"Boot Camp," an afterschool program provided by officers from Davis Monthan Air Force Base, proved to be popular with students. The officers came to one of the middle schools every day for two weeks. They taught the children (called "trainees") in the areas of respect, discipline, physical conditioning, social awareness and teamwork. The kids, officers and chaperones even spent a night in the school, Benton said.

Parents and community members were invited to participate in a graduation program, where several students were honored. The boot camp proved so successful that it is now part of the 21st Century Community Learning Center's program.

Meanwhile, the Tucson Urban League, a partner at one of the sites, offered a class in African American Studies.

"Twelve students signed up and as it happened, none of them was African American," Benton said. "They studied the history of the Southwest, read reports and heard guest speakers talk about how our school system used to be segregated before 1952. They visited a museum on the Buffalo Soldiers. The kids really liked the class, and at the end, the Urban League gave them each a small stipend."

Afterschool students also have built model airplanes, a model biosphere and solved a crime using DNA.

Sano y Salvo's summer program consists of a morning rotation of reading, language arts, math and science classes and an afternoon of electives such as arts, music, marine biology, folk dancing and drama. This summer, children will plan, set up, stock and care for aquariums in each building. For each project, students must keep a journal.

Although there are no statistics to prove whether classroom grades and achievement scores are up, it is Benton's belief that the afterschool program has made a difference academically.

And at the very least, school attendance has improved as a result of the afterschool program, she said. And that's not a bad starting point from which to begin work toward academic achievement.

Contact: *Barbara Benton, 520-617-7434* ■

School Readiness Can Close Educational Gap for Young

As afterschool programs become an increasingly bright light in the arsenal of community strategies aimed at improving academic achievement, there is a steady and growing voice emerging to urge that a child's earliest years not be forgotten.

"You can talk about really fine afterschool programs, but without high quality child-care and preschool programs, children aren't going to move forward," according to Susan Ochshorn, program associate for the Child Care Action Campaign, a New York City-based national advocacy group for children.

"If we neglect ages 0-5, we're only dealing with half of the puzzle. Education is really a continuum."

Statistics confirm that Ochshorn has a point. It has been estimated that more than one-third of the nation's children come to kindergarten unprepared, meaning, among other things, that they may not be ready to learn, they may not be in good physical or mental health, they may not be socially well-adjusted, they may not know how to get along with others, and they may not know how to communicate. In poor, urban areas, the figure may be doubled.

Preschool and afterschool programs both seek to close these gaps in a number of creative ways.

"Common to afterschool and preschool [programs] is a collaborative effort on the part of the whole community to get children ready and ensure their success in life," Ochshorn said. "You can't look at one without the other. Commitment to this is really a community commitment."

Preparing kids for school early on helps blossom educationally and emotionally

King Urban Life Center Projects in Buffalo, New York, has embraced that commitment, according to Director Claity Massey.

Located in a former church, the center is supported through a collaboration of private and public institutions, including the public schools, and operates 11 programs aimed at closing the student performance gap.

Of the 89 students in the pre-K to second grade, 30 percent are white and bused in from south Buffalo. The rest, all African American, are from the surrounding Buffalo neighborhood on the east side.

"All the children we're working with are

from inner-city environments in which the population is struggling with poverty. The parents are in a survival mode. They can't be proactive on behalf of children's' educational needs. They are concerned about eating and finding a place to live," Massey said.

"We thought we could provide a wonderful environment for these kids, but we've found that when they come at age 4, they are already two years behind developmentally."

Massey believes that children's basic needs are often ignored, causing many developmental delays. Among the children served by the center, emotional development is probably the most delayed area.

"Most of the them are functioning at an 18-24-month level, still trying to establish basic trust," she said.

"One thing we've discovered is that there is confusion about emotions. These children, at 3 and 4, confuse hunger and anger and so have inappropriate responses. We're helping them to identify their emotions."

Teachers work with preschool through second-grade children on reading, drama, art and music. In a recent dramatic presentation of a well-known fairy tale, all eyes were riveted on the third Little Pig, a 4-year-old, who was expressing herself so well that the audience's appreciation was palpable.

"This child was pretty much nonverbal and had already been identified as special needs," Massey said. "But in the performance, she glowed. She knew what she was doing."

Helping children to glow is important, said Massey. Parents' roles are equally important, so they are brought into the program as much as possible. There is a weekly on-site activity for parents and their children. For those who don't come to the center, there is a home connection program. Once a week, a teacher will visit them.

"We can't break this cycle without involving the parents," Massey said.

Even with the best intervention, a two-year gap cannot be closed in one year. The center is contemplating participating in the "Parents As Teachers" (PAT) program, a nationally used program developed at Yale University.

"Once a week, the trained teachers would visit the homes of families with babies," Massey said. "It isn't a motivational program; it's informational. It points out milestones and curriculum in simple terms. For example, 'This week the baby should be stimulated by a rattle.' Or, 'This week the baby should be stacking blocks.'"

The traveling teachers model for parents and leave them the toys to work with until the next visit.

"Research has shown that by starting this program with infants and toddlers and parents, it will make a difference and children will be developmentally ready to learn on time," Massey said.

PAT is an important part of the Comer/Zigler Initiative (CoZi) in the Bowling Park School and neighborhood of Norfolk, Virginia. CoZi is a school-reform initiative of parents, community members, teachers and administrators working together to solve school problems, according to coordinator Lorraine Flood. There are five CoZi sites in Norfolk, as well as several afterschool programs offering homework help and enrichment. Each CoZi school has a parent

educator who makes home visits as part of the PAT program.

"We piloted this as a state early-childhood project in 1992. It was, in part, an effort to bring the community into the educational process. The emphasis is on children's development, with a goal of early literacy, reading to children and getting parents to read to them often while they are young," Flood said.

"Now when these kids come to the pre-K classes, they are ready. They know colors, shapes and how to get along with others."

Flood agreed with Massey that reaching the parents is the key to getting children ready to learn. That makes it especially gratifying that Bowling Park Elementary is part of a collaborative effort funded by a Goals 2000 grant from the federal government to establish a parent information and resource center for Virginia.

According to Flood, "The children love the programs because they are cared for and because their parents are connected to it."

Such characteristics are integral to strong school readiness efforts, according to Child Care Action Campaign's Ochshorn.

In the ideal world, the community needs to marshal all its resources to support young children and facilitate their partnership with public schools, which, in turn, Ochshorn said, need to be motivated to work with early-care and education providers.

An Americorps volunteer reads with children.

"More professional training across the sectors is badly needed along with a recognition that the business community must invest its time, expertise and any resources it can to facilitate this sort of collaboration. Moreover, public school administrators — particularly superintendents — need to understand the connections between the early critical years and a child's ability to perform well later in their school years.

"In the final analysis, it is a recognition on the part of a community that neither the school nor the early childhood community can do it alone. But by pooling resources, both have the potential to secure for children and their families a better future." ■

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spotlight

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CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

"City of Firsts" Turning Classrooms Inside Out

By ANN YOST

The schoolhouse is a different shape in Philadelphia these days. No longer does learning take place just from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. within four walls, or behind straight rows of desks, or with chalk, pencil and paper.

Today, the schoolhouse more often is open long before and after the traditional school day as well as Saturdays and summers. Just as often, learning takes place in a church, a community-based organization, a workplace or the community itself.

Indeed, learning in Philadelphia has blossomed into a vibrant, colorful, multidimensional experience involving a myriad of partnerships between and among the district's 215,000 students, 13,000 teachers and administrators, thousands of parents, and hundreds of community businesses and organizations.

Learning can be a vibrant experience.

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Ten Steps for Success

The "Children Achieving" agenda is the Philadelphia School District's commitment to the educational philosophy that all children can achieve at high levels as well as its strategies to reform the system. On the following pages are the 10 components of the plan, which was approved by the Board of Education in 1994.

The Philadelphia School District is one of the largest urban districts to attempt such a comprehensive school reform plan. The community adopted its "Children Achieving" blueprint five years ago, calling for an overhaul of the antiquated, failing system in the largely low-income district, where more than 50 percent of the students receive public assistance and 74 percent are children of color.

"We were a big urban district, and our performance was dismal," said Superintendent David W. Hornbeck, a charismatic and determined advocate of "Children Achieving." "Since we started this reform, we have had a significant increase in achievement."

The reform agenda is based upon raising academic expectations for all children. It includes providing supports, both academic and nonacademic, to help students achieve those standards. It provides for retraining of teachers, mobilization of parents and business people, a decentralization of the school district into 22 learning clusters — each with instructional leaders and support from Family Resource Networks — and the creation of smaller learning communities within the schools.

It also supports and encourages extended learning opportunities and aggressive recruitment of community involvement. Great emphasis has been placed on two critical transitions: preparing small children for school and preparing secondary students for the worlds of higher education and work.

Fundamental to the plan was changing the way people view children, education, the schools, the community and their role in preparing children for life success. Long-held traditions had to be met head-on and, in many cases, shattered.

"Community schools are part of it. A school has to be a central part of a community. In my mind, a school is a wonderful service provider, but a community really has to have the capacity to manage everything that is going on in the lives of its children."

"We thought this required a comprehensive, systemic approach," Hornbeck said. "...We needed a change in the belief system of public education in order to improve the achievement level of all kids. The first question that has to be asked in contemplating any action or policy consideration is: 'Does this move contribute or distract from the proposition that all kids can achieve?'"

According to Hornbeck, the only thing that remains of Philadelphia's previous education philosophy is what children and youth should be learning. The "Children Achieving" blueprint calls for all children to learn proficiency in reading, math, science, health, arts, world languages, social studies, communications, problem-solving, school-to-career skills, multicultural competency and technological literacy.

"At the basis of the reform is the belief that every child can achieve at high levels," said Mary Jane Clancy, director of the

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district's Office of Education For Employment (EFE), whose job it is to find business partners and service-learning opportunities, and to train supervising teachers and business people as part of school reform.

"Community schools are part of it. A school has to be a central part of a community. In my mind, a school is a wonderful service provider, but a community really has to have the capacity to manage everything that is going on in the lives of its children."

Supporting Parents

If Clancy is a district advocate for involving businesses and community-based organizations, Rochelle Nichols Solomon, chairperson of the Alliance Organizing Project (AOP), is her counterpart in supporting parents.

"Our philosophy is that a great deal of what impacts the children's learning is the culture of the school," Nichols Solomon said. "The parents are organizing to create a constituency in the school to act as a resource and to hold the school accountable."

AOP was created in 1995 by an informal coalition of educators with a goal of providing training, support and resources for parents. The group has developed a cadre of parents from about 25 schools, who identify areas where parents and educators can work collectively.

"Parents are initially concerned about bad playgrounds, leaking roofs and bad lunches. Then they progress to bilingual program availability and reading proficiency. They do outreach and listening campaigns surfacing issues they can work on, then meet and negotiate with principals and teachers," AOP Director Gary Rodwell said.

Academic expectations are raised for all students.

"In many ways, this is outside the experience of our parents, especially those from other cultures. Many people are unaware of how shortchanged the children are getting. In many neighborhoods, parents are so under siege by other pressures, like survival, drugs and gangs, that addressing the education system is just another burden they have to bear in their lives.

"We come along and say there are real problems in the schools, and they need your help. One of the things we argue for as parents is that the school be returned to

1 Set high expectations for everyone.

Head Start can make a difference.

2 Design accurate performance indicators to hold everyone accountable for results.

the type of institution it was in many of our neighborhoods 20 years ago, when the buildings were open until 6 or 7 p.m. with afterschool activities going on for children and parents. Schools open now five minutes before they start and close five minutes after. It's a missed opportunity inside our neighborhoods."

Added Nichols Solomon: "There are so many pieces to a reform agenda within a school. Underneath, we are changing the interaction and dynamics between the stakeholders, parents to parents, parents to educators. With this work, we are developing an appetite for change, developing a comfort level with the tension in the changing dynamics between stakeholders in the schools."

Working closer with parents has increased the district's awareness of children's needs that go beyond traditional instruction. Each school has a Family Resource Network, which includes a nurse, social worker, psychologist and community coordinator as well as teachers, parents and anyone else who is interested. The district has found health insurance for thousands of students and currently is setting up technology support to allow on-line access so nurses can check the records for children covered by Medicaid.

Afterschool Programs

Another big-city problem can be safety. Parents and youth have organized to address this problem.

An important tool in helping children achieve and keeping them safe has been the district's emphasis on afterschool programs. When the reform program began, there were relatively few such programs. Those that did exist usually came out of the entrepreneurship of a given school.

"Now we have a partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Recreation that keeps 120 schools open one or more days a week after school," Hornbeck said. "My goal is to have every school open from 3 to 6 p.m. every weekday."

There are 257 schools in the Philadelphia district.

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), a child advocacy nonprofit organization, works with public and private community groups to stimulate the development of more afterschool activities through its "Campaign for Kids" initiative.

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According to Deputy Director Harriet Dichter, "We believe that school reform can't be done without afterschool [programs]."

PCCY has collaborated with the school district's Family Resource Network to bring afterschool opportunities to students. Three years ago, the organization identified nearly 60,000 students ages 5-12 who were unsupervised after school. Today, with nearly 50 schools with fully developed afterschool programs and with 800 other afterschool offerings at certain times of the week, that number has been reduced to 40,000.

PCCY estimates that half the school populations have some form of afterschool program available.

For high school students, afterschool activities may include community service. During 1998-99, 15,000 students participated in service-learning projects, along with 3,500 community volunteers. The goal is to recruit 2,500 community partners and train 6,000 teachers to coordinate service-learning.

Connecting youth to community also occurs through work-based learning sites. Through a School-to-Career initiative, students learn they have a place in the community and that their role has value.

School-to-Career Director Cassandra Jones calls her initiative the "how" in achieving the high standards set for high school students. School reform, she said, means providing support, mentors, programs, opportunities and follow-up to students beyond high school. Every child is given the same preparation whether he or she is headed for college or the workplace after graduation.

Students work in programs at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, Holiday Inn Select, Brooks Electronics; in departments of the city government; for the Philadelphia AFL-CIO and its affiliate locals; and at local banks.

Sheila Dill runs School-to-Career at PNC Bank.

"When the students get here they think the only job is as a bank teller. They find out about marketing, and investing, and branch managers, and all kinds of jobs," she said.

"This is a win-win program for the students and for the bank. We get someone who is fresh, has desire and drive. For the kids, there are a lot of challenges and there are a lot of rewards, like tuition reimbursement. In the five years I've done this job, we've hired 12 people. It's enjoyable to help someone and it just makes me proud, because all 12 are still on board."

School-to-Career also is about neighborhoods, Jones said.

"We are empowering these students, not to leave the city, but to bring their knowledge back to the neighborhoods." It also helps teachers know where to concentrate their efforts. They [students] will come back and say, 'We needed more preparation in writing.' Or, 'Without trigonometry or exposure to a second language, you can't come in the door.'"

EFE's Clancy, along with many community representatives, created the Philadelphia Youth Network, an organization that grew out of a partnership of parents, students, community-based organizations, youth-serving agencies and business representatives. This fall, it will begin to broker services for city youth ages 14-21.

"We're trying to make sure that for every child who needs it there is extended

Shrink the centralized bureaucracy and let schools make more decisions.

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Provide intensive and sustained professional development to all staff.

time for tutoring, mentoring and learning," Clancy said. Clearly, without community support, it would be impossible.

This past summer, the schools worked with Philadelphia Futures (a nonprofit coalition of business people and public agencies designed to help low-income young people prepare for college) to put 1,100 9th- and 10th-graders on 30 college campuses for up to six weeks. Each child had a learning plan worked out with a regular schoolteacher, then he or she worked with a professor on a project.

Clancy hopes to connect the program with other initiatives and federal grants, with an eye not only toward leveraging funds, but also toward providing extended learning opportunities for children all the way through school.

So far the program appears to be working. According to Clancy, dropout rates are lower and promotion rates and grade-point averages are higher for children who go to work-based learning sites outside the school building.

"Every child has a mentor in the workplace. They have time with an adult focused on very real work. They feel part of a team. Learning is applied and it's exciting. They're accountable for their work and actions," she said.

"The notion for me is really being able to leverage dollars for youth to provide opportunities."

That's an important task, given the limited dollars the district must stretch. The state provides the district with $1,900 less per child than nearby suburban districts. That amounts to $56,000 less per classroom.

Assessing Progress

Just how all these efforts are effecting children's learning is Katherine Conner's job to assess.

"Over the past five years," said Conner, associate superintendent of the Office of Standards, Student Equity and Student Services, "the district has worked hard to move to a standards-driven, performance-based approach of accountability. We want to get real clear on what we want student outcomes to be and develop ways to assess whether they are getting there. We are promoting a variety of kinds of ways to help students and schools get to the standards, but they are the same standards."

Conner points out that assessment is an ongoing process. In Philadelphia, the district started by changing the testing system from using primarily multiple-choice exams to using tests that are more performance-based. The focus is on how many kids are doing basic, advanced or proficient work, as opposed to below basic.

Another innovation has been to promote increased participation in the testing.

"In 1996, only 50 percent of enrolled students took standardized tests," Conner said. "We are now up to 75 percent. Everyone is expected to take tests except kids who haven't learned any English yet and the severely learning impaired. That's part of what it means to have a single standard."

Each school is held accountable for its results. There are systemwide targets, and each school also has two-year goals. If, for example, 40 percent of the kids are performing below the basic level, the school has to reduce the number by 10 percent every two years.

Schools that make their goals get an award of $1,500 per certified staff member to be used at the school. If they fail, the district will send in a team to help the academic effort. In the most extreme case, a school could receive all new staff and administration. The superintendent's salary is also tied into results.

"We're also working on identifying best practices, helping every school create a school plan and disseminating research-based strategies for schools," Conner said.

Checkpoint years for students include standardized tests in 4th and 8th grades. Children who are struggling in the 3rd and 7th grades get first priority in afterschool, summer and tutoring programs.

"With summer, afterschool and extended-year programs, we can imagine different configurations," Conner said.

"Who will deliver the instruction? Whoever can be effective. If a vendor can teach kids effectively or a community group has an idea, we are willing to listen. We're very open to what will work. And it can be at 7 a.m. or midnight, summer or Christmas. There are many ways to learn."

As Conner sees it, there now is accountability for staff, superintendent and students. What is needed is accountability from the community to develop the resources that will allow the district to increase instructional time and opportunities to learn for at-risk kids, early childhood programs, school-to-career programs, technology, library services, and parental and family involvement.

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), a child advocacy nonprofit organization, works with public and private community groups to stimulate the development of more afterschool activities through its "Campaign for Kids" initiative.

Thus far, the efforts to improve learning look promising. According to Hornbeck, the number of students who score at a basic proficiency level or above is up 40 percent over the past three years.

"Increasingly, it had been my view that both our quality of life in this country and the democracy itself were more and more at risk if there weren't some city of diversity someplace where all kids achieved at high levels," he said. "We decided to be the first."

If Hornbeck's goals are lofty, he is realistic that such ambitious change takes time. By 2008, the district will have engaged in comprehensive school reform for a complete K-12 cycle. To the superintendent, that seems reasonable not only to have all reform efforts in place, but also to have all students performing at world-class levels. ■

5

Make sure that all students are ready for school.

mmunity at Heart
of School Reform in Philadelphia

Provide students with the community supports and services they need to succeed in school.

...areness with academics.

Opportunities to learn are everywhere in Philadelphia. Afterschool programs are blossoming. Service-learning projects and school-to-career offerings are taking learning into the community. And community-based organizations and local churches, among others, are providing learning outside the school day and school walls. Even preschool and post-graduation are taking on new meaning.

The realization that learning can take place anywhere in a community was an important revelation for everyone. Even better, according to school reform leaders, has been the recognition that the community must work with schools for meaningful and lasting change to be achieved and sustained.

As the historic city meets the 21st century, the challenge becomes how to build upon these efforts so that all children will benefit. Reformers agree that more than anything else, it will take sustained leadership, the long-term commitment of community and school leaders, and sacrifice.

In the meantime, there is much that shows promise. What follows are brief looks at a number of these promising elements.

When the Community Leads

As one of its key components, the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative stresses that afterschool programs should strengthen partnerships between schools and community-based organizations.

As part of Philadelphia's 21st CCLC grant ($958,377 per year for three years to form community learning centers in six middle schools), Congreso de Latinos Unidos Inc., a nonprofit service provider in north Philadelphia, has joined in partnership with Julia de Burgos Middle School to offer a program based on the Beacon School's program philosophy of tying cultural awareness with academics. Promoting multicultural understanding is important in a neighborhood divided between Latino and African-American families.

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"Our population is one of the poorest in the country," said Wanda Mial, Congreso deputy director. "We have struggled to involve middle school and older kids, but even so, our kids don't read when they graduate. We are trying to infuse academics with things that are relevant and the kids can feel invested in."

Martial arts was a favorite for many of the 550 elementary and middle-school students who participated in the summer program. Instructor Lucas Rizera, taught the children the history of *capoiera*, a martial arts/dance that originated in Brazil during a rebellion of African slaves. Because slaves were not allowed to own weapons or to practice martial arts, they developed a graceful dance that disguised the attacking moves.

The students were captivated, according to Rizera, and he helped them understand that hip-hop, modern dance, jazz and break dancing all are twists on *capoiera*. By the end of the summer, students put together all they learned into a play, which spanned the slave era to present day. Afterwards, the children joined hands to show spirituality and unity.

Congreso is contracting with the school district to provide other afterschool learning services.

"One of our goals is to reconnect kids more positively to their schools and to create a community partnership in the school system," Mial said. "Our next step will be to work with the district to keep de Burgos open until 9 p.m. We need to provide adult training as well."

Churches: Faith into Action

Many Philadelphia churches are committed to education. The Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity has been a particularly strong advocate for public education and for legislation to provide adequate funding for schools.

Many of the churches that are part of Black Clergy have afterschool programs at their churches, said the Rev. Robert Shine, the group's vice president. The afterschool program at his Berachah Baptist Church serves 75 students, with another 75 on a waiting list.

Students in the program, which is academic-based and uses only certified teachers, range from first grade through high school age. Although regular school subjects are the focus during the week, children are taken on outings and have supervised sports programs on weekends. Some Sundays are designated as Recognition Day for students who have shown progress.

According to Shine, young people in the program are more confident and more attentive in their regular classrooms. Teachers report that behavior and conduct have improved, as have socialization and conflict resolution skills.

"I have always believed that education was the main issue we needed to address in urban communities," Shine said. "The educated will become contributors and not liabilities to society. Through education, you can learn the importance of ethics in work and in developing relationships."

The congregation of Mother African Zoar United Methodist Church ran an afterschool

In dance class, children learn the history of *capoiera*.

7 Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials.

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Freedom Schools stress leadership development.

8 Engage public in shaping, understanding, supporting and participating in school reform.

program at the church for children at nearby Spring Garden Elementary School for some 10 years. Now congregation members go to the school to help teachers run the academically oriented program. They also help the school put on banquets, career days and other special events.

"Our community is one of the most impoverished communities in Philadelphia," the Rev. Ralph Blanks said. "We have experienced great joy over the last couple of years as reading and mathematics scores have improved. We believe that part of it is due to our involvement."

Canaan Baptist Church offers a holistic, child-centered approach.

"Most of our children are of African ancestry," said Carol Hall, director of the Sankofa (a Ghanaian term meaning "to return to the past, to envision the future") program. "We try to center the curriculum on their ancestry and do a lot of cultural awareness and self-esteem building."

The afterschool program draws children from 10 of the district's 22 clusters and can handle about 50 students a day. Sankofa hires certified teachers and teaches enrichment through the church computer lab and many other academic offerings. The church charges participants a small tuition fee and provides van service from the school.

"We've noticed a huge difference in grades and self-confidence among the kids in the two years we've had the program," Hall said.

Sankofa teachers have developed a strong parental involvement component, particularly important in a community where parents often are not politically involved or are shut out of decisionmaking, and where an overriding issue is child safety.

"We offer workshops that answer questions of interest to parents, such as what to expect from report card conferences, and how to become active in the political process," Hall said.

An important message parents leave with is that when they remain isolated, they can't make much happen. But together, they can have a powerful voice for change.

Leaving No Child Behind

Friends Neighborhood Guild Inc. is another community-based organization that partnered with the school district in the summer of 1999 on behalf of area youth. The guild proposed developing a Freedom School, which stresses leadership development by using college students as teachers and high school interns as helpers.

Freedom Schools are a service model of the Black Community Crusade for Children and are coordinated nationally by the Children's Defense Fund. The curriculum includes community service projects, conflict resolution tactics, opportunities for cultural enrichment and reading.

Working with the district, the summer school program was targeted for third-and seventh-graders who were considered at-risk

of not passing achievement exams. In addition, by hiring and training 140 interns from the high schools of Philadelphia, the Freedom School created opportunities for real-life work experiences and leadership development.

"Our group decided to clean up Franklin Field Park in West Kensington," said Keisha Davis, a 16-year-old intern and junior from Martin Luther King Jr. High School. The students painted a mural, cleaned up the park and covered the neighborhood with fliers announcing the project.

But vandals defaced the art work. Undaunted, Keisha and students restored their creation and then worked with the neighborhood to ensure that residents and the city keep an eye on it.

"I learned a lot of leadership from the program," said Keisha, who will receive service-learning credit (a graduation requirement) for her summer as an intern.

Parents: Engine for Opportunity

The rough passage from home to school and back again started Sheppard Elementary School parents talking.

"We live in a drug-infested environment," said Marta Aviles, one of the founders of Sheppard's afterschool program. "There were drug dealers on every corner. Cars would pull over and stop traffic and buy drugs, all while kids were going in or coming out of school. We were having to walk with the kids every day."

Eventually, walking gave way to talking. Parents began to meet regularly in 1995 and in a short time they engineered extra police protection for students, negotiated a new roof for the school and got the go-ahead for an all-day kindergarten program.

"They [school officials] agreed to all-day kindergarten, but there was nobody to register kids, so four of us went door to door to register them," Aviles said. "We ended up with five kindergartens. The school had to rent space at a nearby community center."

But that was only the beginning. Parents questioned whether teachers were providing all they could, and teachers felt parents were sending kids to school unprepared and undisciplined. It didn't help that in this school with a predominantly Latino population, most of the teachers could speak only English. To top it off, parents, who by now had formed the Sheppard Parents Association, learned that their elementary school was ranked at the bottom of the school district for academic achievement.

One answer seemed to be an afterschool program. It took time, but eventually parents convinced the school staff to keep the school open from 3 to 6 p.m. for afterschool learning opportunities.

The program blossomed, with tutors coming from the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University and the League of United Latin American Citizens. Schoolteachers worked in the program and parents volunteered to set up classes, organize trips, provide child care and bring snacks. Often the volunteer parents made sure children had safe passage home.

The Sheppard experience underscores the importance of sustained parental involvement, according to organizers. Today, the afterschool effort is operated solely by the

Ensure adequate resources and use them effectively.

School readiness can increase early learning.

Be prepared to address all of these priorities together and for the long term, starting now.

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school. The original volunteers have moved on with their children to middle school, and other parents have not taken their places. As a result, the afterschool program is still open but offers fewer options.

Getting Ready to Learn

The underpinning of the "Children Achieving" agenda is school readiness. Studies have shown that early exposure to academic and developmental activities can significantly increase a child's chances of efficient learning in kindergarten.

Kay Lovelace, associate superintendent for the Offices of Leadership and Learning, and Jennifer Plumer Davis, director of Pre-K and Head Start, are committed to achieving school readiness for all Philadelphia children.

While Head Start has had sites in Philadelphia since 1970, the pre-K program is new. Hours for the preschool programs have expanded before and after the school day — a particular boon to parents affected by welfare reform. These preschool hours reflect an educational environment.

"There need to be links between Head Start and day care, and the regular school program," Plumer Davis said. "The research is clear. Without an educational preschool experience, kids in an urban area who might not have a lot of books in their homes, or enriching activities, are not ready for school. If they haven't been introduced to numbers and letters and books, they are behind other kindergartners when they get to school."

Another school readiness initiative has been the full-day kindergarten the district has offered for the past four years. Already, school officials can see increases in student achievement.

"Our teachers are excited," Lovelace said. "They are finding that if you put a strong educational environment in place, you will see children learning at a rate you didn't expect."

Parental involvement has been a priority. Geneva Moss has volunteered at her local Head Start program at Anderson Elementary School for more than a decade.

"They [my grandchildren] are much better students for it," she said. "Even though we are big on reading as a family, it still helped. It helps them get used to the idea of being away from mommy and me and learning to interact with other children."

Education Takes on Life

The entrepreneurial spirit is thriving in Sulzberger Middle School, a 21st Century Community Learning Center.

Inside a former storage room, students have used rain gutters, tubs, pumps and sawhorses to fashion a hydroponics garden where fresh basil is flourishing. Flourishing so much, in fact, that student entrepreneurs will be meeting this year with representatives from the White Dog Café and the Fresh Fields grocery chain to

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negotiate a contract to sell their hard work for profit.

The idea for the business was born during a summer community service project. Students uncovered the opportunity while helping nearby residents with their community gardens. The project is one of several in the entrepreneurial community, one of four small learning communities that Sulzberger offers as part of the school day, but whose activities often continue after school.

"This kind of project captures their [the students'] imagination," teacher Larry Jones said. "The kids can come in and work on the business after school, or, if they work on the basil during the day, teachers know they can make up work after school."

One young man, Martin Greene, got turned on to learning as a result of the project.

"He's very intelligent but had never been interested in school," Jones said.

"One Monday morning we came in and the plants looked kind of brown. I don't have a green thumb, and I suggested we throw them out. Martin wanted to give them another chance...

"By the end of the day, he had fixed a leak and experimented with feeding nutrients and chemicals to the plants, finally deciding that a staggered schedule would work best. By 3 o'clock, he called me in to the room, where the plants were looking a lot better.

"'See Mr. Jones,' he said. 'These plants are survivors.'"

As Jones sees it, what happens through project-based learning is that students learn how to take steps to solve problems and how such skills are useful in a real world. They learn to research and ask questions. In the final analysis, these methods of learning relate directly back to their academic classes.

Building Houses and Futures

Another community-based organization to take on education in the literal sense has been the YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School. Founded in 1992, and one of many YouthBuild USA youth development programs nationwide, the charter school operates in three locations in the city and this school year will serve 200 students.

YouthBuild serves student who have dropped out of school with a three-pronged program that gives them a chance to earn a high school diploma; to learn building trades, good work habits and self-esteem by rehabilitating abandoned houses; and to contribute to the community through a partnership with AmeriCorps. The YouthBuild curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of its students by incorporating the cultural backgrounds, life experiences and skills that the students bring to the classroom.

YouthBuild is a one-year program, though coordinators are exploring extending the opportunity and support beyond a year and, in fact, beyond graduation.

"We'd like to offer a second year in which the student co-enrolls in a community

YouthBuild students can earn a diploma.

Skills, talents and dreams come together in YouthBuild.

To learn more about what's happening in Philadelphia schools, visit the district's Web site at http://www.philsch.k12.pa.us/comm/

college, and we become an academic support," said Mike Sack, assistant director.

"We get three or four times the number of applicants than we can accept... Once we accept a student, we never give up. We have high expectations and don't let kids fall through the cracks."

Since 1992, YouthBuild students, alternating schoolwork with community service with work on abandoned houses provided by the city, have rehabilitated 42 houses, all of them now homes for low-income families. The rehab experience allows students to learn the construction trade and the value of teamwork, and allows them to see the results of their work in a tangible way.

For YouthBuild students who are not interested in construction, a technology component will be offered soon through YouthBuild partner Cisco, a computer technology company.

"We're trying to keep kids engaged," Sack said. "This is a time in their lives when we need to keep kids connected positively as they develop into young adults, so that when they make mistakes the mistakes are not fatal ones."

Last year, 100 students graduated from YouthBuild. About one-third went on to higher education, another third into the work force (with 20 students finding construction work) and the final third have not done either.

Two years ago, Davina Moore was a 19-year-old dropout with a small son and no prospects. In the spring of 1999, Moore received a high school diploma. She now attends a community college and is planning to transfer to Temple University to pursue a career in criminal justice. YouthBuild was the bridge that took her from where she was to where she is.

"It's fulfilling to look at a house and see how hard work, starting with demolition and following through to the trim work, made it nice and safe again. You learn stuff you never thought you would ever learn. I learned what to do with all the tools. Now I fix things around my house.

"I learned a lot from getting up every morning and getting out there in the cold, with no windows. I learned willpower and leadership. When other people on my team didn't want to be there, I got them motivated. I'd say, 'Let's get this done!'"

Davina hopes to work in law enforcement to make a positive change on Philadelphia streets.

"The teachers (at YouthBuild) were my inspiration," she said. "They kept me going, when times got bad and I cried. It wasn't even just a teacher or a counselor. Everybody there seemed like they had enough time for you."

Twi-Lite's Dawning Realization

Sometimes it is the simple things that make all the difference. When educators began to take a hard look at what was

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keeping Philadelphia youth from getting through school, one thing that became apparent was that daytime school wasn't exactly convenient for older youth whose lives were being shaped by parenthood and other defining issues.

"I had my daughter at 16 and dropped out," said Dawn Eubanks, a new graduate of Twi-Lite schools. "Then two years ago I started to go back to regular day school, but I felt uncomfortable because I was older than most of the kids who were in my class."

But the two-year-old Twi-Lite schools changed all that for Dawn and hundreds of other young adults, all older than 18, who had not completed high school and whose job prospects were not bright.

Twi-Lite schools came out of meetings between school district officials and community partners.

"We knew we'd have a lot of over-age people coming back after welfare reform, and we knew we couldn't take care of them with the standard system," said Larry Arniloff, who oversees the program. "We tried to look at every reason that kids fail and address them."

Twi-Lite operates from 3 to 6 p.m. four days a week. Students can take two courses for credit every 10 weeks. Each quarter is independent and if a student drops during a term, he or she can start again at the next quarter. Five of the district's 10 Twi-Lite school sites offer free child care. In 1998-99, a total of 994 students earned credits and 377 of them graduated, including Eubanks.

"I'm really proud," said Eubanks, who plans to pursue surgical technology. "When I dropped out of school, my family was discouraged I never would go back. This program made it possible."

Empowering Youth

"I want to have people hear my voice," said Jose Garcia, an Olney High School student and member of Youth United for Change (YUC).

People have heard his voice — people in power. In spring 1999, Garcia, Zemier Bernard and Jessica Goode took school officials, including the board of education vice president, on a tour of the school to show them trouble spots, hangouts, peeling paint, broken doors and poor lighting.

"The school was built in 1925," Jose said. "It's falling apart. And the worst thing is the students don't feel safe."

The tour resulted in a three-day cleanup before the school year began. Several Olney students, including Jose, were appointed to a task force committee to review applicants for a new principal — the third the school has had in the past three years.

YUC, with chapters at Kensington, Edison and Olney high schools and plans for a new chapter at Strawberry Mansion High School, dates back to 1991 when Executive Director Rebecca Rathje brought the idea to Philadelphia after a visit to a New York City youth empowerment group.

"I had been working in the schools in the 1980s on an anti-drug program, and I became dismayed when I began to understand the

Olney students have been empowered.

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drug problem in the neighborhoods in a larger context," Rathje said.

"Kids not on drugs were going to school and not learning anything. They were not expected to do well; graduation rates were low and there was little economic opportunity for them. Kids who were graduating couldn't get into local colleges because they hadn't taken algebra or chemistry.

"I thought, if we're going to run a drug prevention program where drugs are an economic base, then we need to create a group that's more about a strong sense of community. We need a place kids can come when they're feeling overwhelmed. All the recreation centers were a wreck. Pools hadn't opened for years, the grounds were full of trash."

So Rathje contacted Steve Honeyman, director of the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project. With his help, YUC was restructured, creating chapters at local high schools. Working with the Kensington principal, the students got the school day extended by 20 minutes and study halls moved from the auditorium to the cafeteria, an atmosphere more conducive to study.

With surveys and comparison studies and information from colleges, they also convinced administrators at Kensington to provide a ninth-grade academy, so all students have an equal chance to take the more difficult, college-bound courses instead of being assigned to tracks before they know their options.

Natalie Padilla, a junior at Olney, joined YUC in 1998. She, too, is on the YUC board.

"I feel strongly that I can do something and become something and make my school better. I lost my father when I was nine. He wanted me to graduate from high school and become a teacher or a doctor or lawyer. I want to become an algebra teacher because I know how much the kids need them," she said.

"Usually, students have to sit back and listen to adults. With YUC, we were given a chance, a vehicle to voice our opinions." ■

—YOST

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